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# LETTER TO THE KING;

IN WHICH THE CONDUCT OF

MR. LENOX, AND THE MINISTER,

IN THE AFFAIR WITH HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS

## THE DUKE OF YORK,

IS FULLY CONSIDERED.

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BY THEOPHILUS SWIFT, ESQ.

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*The King covered his Face; and the King cried with a loud  
Voice, O my Son! ii. Sam. xix. 24.*

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MDCCLXXXIX.



TO THE KING.

S I R,

**A**N individual who has both the happiness and the honour to be personally known to Your Majesty, begs permission to approach Your throne, and to lay before You his sentiments of a late public transaction, thro' which the dignity of Your crown has been invaded, and the safety of Your people alarmed and endangered.

I should not, however, have presumed to address my Sovereign on a subject of such magnitude and importance, had others of more conse-

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quence

quence than myself, and of more ability to execute the very arduous undertaking, come personally forward on an occasion so pressing and interesting to the empire. Much as I respect and love the whole House of Brunswick;—much as I regard the rights of succession, and the sacred images that reflect Your Royal Person;—much as I revere the blood that, descending from the purest founts of Glory and Virtue, rolls hereditary in the veins of Your illustrious offspring;—it is possible I might not have engaged in so painful a task, had not the conduct of Your Majesty's minister excited a suspicion of an alarming nature. The nation, with equal horror and amazement, have beheld an attempt made by an illegitimate



illegitimate descendant of the Stuart family, to cut off the lawful issue and presumptive heir of Your crown\*. Had the attempt been rashly hazarded by a hot-headed young man, who had conceived his own polluted person insulted by Royalty, pity for his weakness had perhaps stifled the stronger emotions of contempt or indignation. But when several days had elapsed between the supposed affront and the execution of vengeance, by a deliberate attack on the life of Your Second Son, to what impulse, to what motive, shall we impute such extraordinary conduct?—To say that Mr. Lenox was stimulated by the feelings of honour, were

\* Perhaps more properly designated "Presumptive Heir to the Heir Apparent."

an affront to the dignity of Human Nature ; an affront to truth ; an affront to every officer that bears Your Majesty's commission. Men of warm and nice feelings resent on the spot : the voice of honour is a call superior to delay : Offended Virtue is an importunate creditor ; she *draws* at sight, and will be paid on demand. The claims of nature are strong ; they *will* be satisfied ; and the laws of the country, which, philosophically speaking, are devoid of passion, wisely make allowance for the impulse of the moment. Men of honour are not apt to *plan* away the lives of others, much less of the Princes of the empire, whereof they themselves are subjects. They consult not whisperers ; neither run they up and  
down

down in corners and club-rooms to acquire proof of imaginary provocations. They are governed by no such procrastinated resentments, such illiberal ideas, such narrow notions of honour! To what motive then shall we ascribe the conduct of that man who hath discovered so small a portion of those *fine sensations* by which men of dignified and exalted feelings are influenced? Shall we impute it to the blood that runs polluted in his veins? or to the cabals of some other person? To one, or to the other of these, his conduct must finally be referred. If to the first, then is Mr. Lenox beneath the resentment of those whose generous birth ranks them in the class of gentlemen. If to the latter, on whom is it natural that

that we should turn our eyes? On a stranger? or on the man who had so recently attempted to cramp and cripple, by a most dangerous, most unprecedented, and most unconstitutional Bill of Regency, the immediate Successor and Representative of Your Majesty? If it shall appear that such man hath uniformly insulted the Princes of Your house;—if he hath been observed, at the very instant that the iron of Mr. Lennox's rage flamed the hottest, to walk in amity and familiarity with the very man who had meditated the destruction of his Prince;—shall it be said that his conduct does not justify suspicion? or that injustice is done to him by presuming him the guilty suggester of the deed? Shall not a deluded people take the alarm? Shall their  
just



just suspicions be lulled into a dangerous security? Shall they passively endure the insult? Shall they silently behold their Prince degraded, and his life exposed to the revenge of an imperious ambition?—to that haughty hatred of your crown and family which has systematically marked the conduct of Your minister? As a father, Your Majesty must ever bleed for the dark and daring attempt that has been made on the life of a deservedly beloved child, not more the darling of Your heart, than the mirror of Your own distinguished greatness. As the father of Your people, You must lament, with them, the vengeance employed against an excellent and amiable youth, to whom the nation looked up with equal joy and reverence;

ence; and whose sacred person even foreigners regard with esteem: for Your Majesty does not require to be told, that all Europe, at this moment, stands astonished at the deed, and can scarcely credit the unrepented violence that has been offered to Your House.

The conduct of the Royal Duke has excited the admiration of every court in Europe. His Majesty of Prussia, when the report of the Prince's magnanimity reached his ear, exclaimed in a rapture, "Were my uncle living, how would the veteran rejoice to find that his pupil had acted up to his instructions!" If such were, and such undoubtedly *was*, the language of the Prussian Monarch, with what contempt, with what

what indignation, with what horror must he behold the conduct of Mr. Lenox—of *that man* whom Your minister has had the address to convert from a Coward to a Hero;—from a Bravo to a Soldier of Honour? But, alas! England is the only country in which Mr. Lenox is reputed a hero.

Sir, for myself, I am neither ashamed nor afraid to say, that I love my king, and regard all the branches of his house. My ancestors lost much of their blood, and much of their fortunes in the Royal service. I am not a boastful man; but should their descendant be called on, it is possible he might not shrink from his duty, or dishonour his birth. Sure I am, he would defend with his blood the life of the excellent youth which has  
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been

been wantonly, and I will add, most deliberately endangered. I trust, therefore, that howsoever feebly the present question may be argued by me, I shall at least obtain credit for my zeal and sincerity in defence of the honour of Your house, the safety of Your throne, and the dignity of the country at large. Under this sanction, I have ventured to throw myself at the feet of Your Majesty, and to claim Your indulgence, whilst I express the emotions of a loyal and bleeding heart. It is a duty which I owe to my Prince; and, in the discharge of that duty, I feel myself confidently right. Forward, however, I have not been found on the present occasion: hoping the sanguinary scene at Wimbledon would have been



been confined to the spot, and that it would never have penetrated behind the royal curtain;—dear as I deemed the life and interests of the Prince, I delayed to draw my pen until other nations had taken the alarm, and publicly expressed their fears and astonishment. These, I trust, will be found sufficient motives both for my having continued silent so long, and for my being the only man who has, even thus late, *personally* met the question.

But if, as a *subject*, (and it is my boast, Sir, that I am Your's,) I deplore and shudder at the desperate attempt, what must be the sufferings of an injured and insulted Monarch, whose parental feelings do honour, not less to Royalty than to Human

Nature itself?—Of Him, whose affection for the children of his loins is the theme of thousands, and an example to all mankind? It is not for me to paint the distresses of a wounded monarch, and afflicted father; but allow me to say, that my heart rains tears whilst I but think of it.

On the Beloved Partner of Your griefs and pleasures, with unaffected concern I would turn my eyes: on Her, to whose softness of soul, whose mildness of heart, whose parental affection the whole nation has borne ample testimony. How vast then, and severe, how deep and searching the distractions which tear and rend the bosom of that amiable woman! To vent them aloud in sighs, or discharge them in tears, is the privilege of

of the meanest subject ; yet this, it seems, is denied unto Her ; and her maternal feelings are publicly sacrificed on the altar of *State-Policy*, to gratify the inordinate ambition and insulting pride of a young, imperious minister. The very *Sanctum* of Your palace has been violated ; and the sensibility of a wounded mother unnaturally sported with, to give colour to the deed.

Pregnant, however, with alarm and horror, as this instance of your minister's conduct appears to the nation, a more dreadful danger lurks in the back-ground. From his studied irreverence towards all the branches of Your Royal House, what may not be presumed ? I am not a man disposed to anticipate evil, or indulge suspicion ; but God forbid that any man,

man, misled by a false ambition, should assume a parity with Your royal offspring; or should start up in any shape, or under any pretence, the rival of their claims! Human Nature, I trust, is not wholly capable of such insidious depravity: but should the several branches of the Brunswick house be lopped off one by one —

I beg leave to state a fair proposition; and I implore Your Majesty's gracious attention:—That, had Your illustrious house consisted of two branches only; and if, by any conspiracy, one of them had been cut off, it remained with Heaven alone to say where the national confusion and calamity would have ended! but ever praised be the King of Kings, who hath guarded Your throne with  
a thick



a thick shade of furrounding branches ; which neither the lightning of a mortal arm can pierce, nor the thunder of disloyalty destroy.

But though a man should be found who might lop the branch, it were yet impossible to root the stock out of the heart of every Englishman ! For one, I can tell him, that it is deeply planted *there* : and I hope to hear this expression echoed from England, from Ireland, and from the remotest skirts of the British empire.

But it may be asked, could a cold and cautious minister all at once throw of the mask, and openly embrace the man who had fired at the son of his royal master ? The question surprises, but the answer is still more astonishing. By such *unusual* conduct  
he

he invited the nation to look upon him: the door of personal protection flew open; the asylum of office presented itself to the ministers of faction, impatient to thin the number of those that stood in the way of his ambition. This is the answer that must be given to it:—let Corruption find another, if she can.

I shall not here draw a picture of the hated House of Stuart, and its detested adherents; neither shall I enlarge on the virtues and the glories that follow the illustrious line of Brunswick. Comparison would only enflame, and a parallel render that odious which was meant to be merely just. This, however, must not be passed by without particular attention; That if the bar of bastardy  
cast

cast between Mr. Lenox and Your Son, be of no consideration in the question, (as Your minister, and his friends, affect to say) then is the competitor of Your Son one degree nearer to the Throne of these kingdoms than the Prince. Respect, Sir, forbids me to say more; and I draw a curtain over the offensive picture.

On the other hand, should it be urged that the bar of illegitimacy *does* stand across the escutcheon of this proud young man, and therefore that the apprehended danger doth not apply, this conclusion naturally flows from it; that the person of Mr. Lenox requires that purity which constitutes the gentleman, by rendering him an object deserving a competition with

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those

those who boast an unpolluted descent; and therefore, not having the purity in himself, that he condescended to become the instrument of another.

Let us not be told that Your Majesty purified his blood, and made Mr. Lenox a gentleman, the day you made him an officer, and gave him a commission to guard and defend Your own sacred person. This argument, however, will hardly be urged; for the conduct of Mr. Lenox were but the more culpable on that very account. Thus, which ever way the question is turned, the advocates for Mr. Lenox are foiled and defeated.

Had the Royal Duke fallen by the hand of a Russell or a Howard, (dreadful as the thought must ever be!) it had not been so lamentable. Posterity



rity might say, that the gallant youth had greatly died, as he greatly lived. Had he fallen even by the legitimate house of Stuart, no dishonour had attended his fall;—some portion of the old British honour had revived amongst us, to console us for the irreparable loss of his much-valued life;—to awaken in our bosoms the virtuous flames that had slept so long!

But, for a moment, I will suppose, with Your minister, that the feelings of Mr. Lenox were stung by something the Prince had said either *to* him, or *of* him. The question will then stand thus: Not whether Mr. Lenox had a right to challenge the gentleman, who, he conceived, had offended him? But, WHETHER HE HAD ANY RIGHT AT ALL TO FIRE AT THE

## PRESUMPTIVE HEIR OF THE CROWN?

This simplifies the question, and it does not require much labour of argument to determine the point. For my own part I am free to say, at the hazard of my legal reputation, that to *challenge*, or to *fire at* the presumptive heir of the crown, are acts beyond those of a simple misdemeanour; and that if they be not high treason, they approach to something extremely like it. When a Prince is born to us, the legislature always addresses the throne on the joyous occasion; justly observing, that such birth is a fresh accession of security to the empire. In like manner, whenever the visitation of God snatches from the world a Prince of the realm, an address of condolence waits upon the throne,

throne, commemorating a circumstance so unfortunate to the country. For the same reason, and to preserve the rights of succession inviolate, the life of a Prince of Wales is wisely hedged round with statutes; — the shade of those statutes covers and extends over the heir presumptive, as the sword of the Angel turned every way to guard the tree of life. But even Paradise has ceased to be secure from pollution; nor is the hereditary tree of monarchy always safe from the unhallowed hand of violence.

I am no friend to the multiplication of penal statutes; but as a professor of the laws, and an assertor of the rights and security of the throne, I feel myself more immediately called

on

on to suggest the necessity of a solemn act of the whole legislature to protect the lives and persons of the several Princes of the Royal Blood. When the Scythian philosopher \* objected to Solon,

\* *Anacharsis*. This philosopher is, perhaps, the strongest instance on record of the uncultivated powers of the human mind. Born and living in a barbarous, uncivilized country, so vast were the depths of his wisdom, and so wide the extent of his reputation, that the celebrated Solon travelled into Scythia on purpose to consult him on the framing of the laws, which he afterwards established at Athens; and which, no doubt, derived considerable advantage from the advice of Anacharsis. It was at this famous interview that the Scythian Sage delivered that memorable saying, which has since been retailed, without acknowledgment, for more than two thousand years. It is time, however, that it should be restored to its original author, though Valerius Maximus has been



Solon, that his code of laws had not provided against the crime of *parricide*, the law-giver of Athens answered, "That crime is impossible." Experience, however, proved this famous been beforehand with me: "Quam porro subtiliter Anacharxis leges Arancarum telis comparabat." De Sap. Dict.

The good and learned Priest of Apollo thus commemorates the saying:—

Γραμμασιν—"α μηδεν των αρχων διαΦερειν, αλλ' ως εκεινα, της μεν ασθενεις και λεπτως των αλισκομενων καδεξειν υπο δε των δυνατων και πλυστων διαρραγεσθαι. Plut. Vit. Sol.

Which may be thus put into an English dress, should a translation, at the very moment I am writing, be allowed me.

Like that illusive net Arachne draws,

To catch the weak, are fram'd the subtle laws;

The rich, the mighty break the cobweb through:—

'Twas Anacharxis first pronounc'd it true.

legif-

legislator to be mistaken ; for, not  
 long after, it was found expedient to  
 enact an express law against this *im-  
 possible crime*. A late event has de-  
 monstrated, that the laws of Great  
 Britain have not yet provided against  
 every possible species of *parricide* ;  
 thus evincing the necessity of an im-  
 mediate and irrevocable act of parlia-  
 ment, rendering it high treason for  
 any person to conspire or compass  
 the death of a Prince of the empire.  
 Were an act to guard Your children  
 and all future Princes of the country  
 from conspiracies or violence recom-  
 mended from the throne, Your loyal  
 people, with one heart and one voice,  
 would spring to meet the wishes of  
 Your Majesty ; and I will venture to  
 say, without fear of contradiction,  
 there

there would not be found a duellist in the kingdom hardy enough to oppose it.

The more the conduct of Mr. Lenox is considered, the more planned and premeditated the whole of it appears. His first attack is made on the elder brother of the Royal Duke, who, he well knew, was constitutionally prevented from resenting the insult. This single circumstance marks, by the way, that sort of spirit which actuated Mr. Lenox. But this is not all : he insults the Heir Apparent of the crown, with boasting in his teeth a name deservedly odious and offensive to his Royal Highness ;—a name that had sown the seeds of family dissension in the very bosom of the Court ;—a name that the Prince himself, it is

confidently said, had ironically thanked for those dissentions;—a name that had questioned the Prince's natural right of Regency;—a name that had falsely villified the virtue, and traduced the honour of that high and most illustrious character;—a name on these, as well as on other accounts, which Mr. Lenox *well knew* that his Prince detested. Here then we behold Your Majesty's minister become the very founder and conductor of the tragedy; he appears in the first act; then stands behind the curtain; now prompts the actor; now manages the puppet: and were any thing wanting to complete the unfolding of the plot, he appears again, in his own proper person, in the very last scene.

It



It is not fair to judge of a man's conduct by detached parts. Consistence, and an apt concurrence of circumstances, are the proper guides to ascertain the truth of a complicate fact. Thus, had not some one of Your Majesty's family been marked for destruction, the fickleness of Mr. Lenox's courage might have reaped its full harvest of satisfaction in that field of honour to which others were anxious to attend him. The members of D'Aubigny's Club, almost to a man, flamed with resentment, and stood on tiptoe with their swords, in defence of their insulted Prince. But this did not suit the purpose of Mr. Lenox; he must have Royal Blood, or none: and since he could not challenge the Heir Apparent of the

Crown without incurring a præmunire, the Heir Presumptive must be made the sacrifice! This, Great Sir, is the man, for whom Your minister gathers laurels, as a proof of his attachment to the House of Brunswick!

For my own part, I feel no difficulty in declaring, that Mr. Lenox does not appear to me to be a hero. If his courage required satisfaction, it still continues unsatisfied; for to shoot at another, is no mark of personal valour. Had the Prince returned his fire, his honour might possibly be said to receive satisfaction from that circumstance; but at present, his courage stands precisely in the same situation that it stood *in before he fired at Your Son*. A decision indeed of his brother-officers has

has given this matter a different turn, and therefore it does not become me to question it; but a rumor prevails, and it is generally supposed to be founded in truth, that His Highness, with that greatness of soul which should distinguish princes, and which always characterises the brave, requested the officers of the regiment to make a favourable report of Mr. Lenox. A request coming from such a quarter was met, no doubt, half-way, by the lenity and generosity of those to whom it was directed; and I honour the gentlemen for the determination which they came to:—Should the fact be true, and, from all the circumstances of the case, there is no reason to disbelieve it, the amiable humanity of the Duke shines as distinguished *out* of the field, as his magnanimity

magnanimity *in* it was conspicuous. If, however, the sentence on Mr. Lenox arose from the uncourted opinion of his brother-officers, the *necessity* of his quitting the regiment does not strike me. To relinquish the good opinion of his own officers, in order to seek it among others, with whom, it is possible, he might not find it, were inconsistent with that *deliberation* which Mr. Lenox appears to have used in every other part of the business.

Every subject of the British empire has virtually sworn allegiance to the House of Brunswick. An attempt therefore to destroy any part of it, is a breach of that civil obligation by which the several members of the state are bound to Your Majesty.—  
The lifted arm of violence, levelling  
destruction



destruction at one of Your children, is a picture the most awful that human imagination can form!—A civic wreath was decreed to the Roman who had saved the life of a common citizen: but with Us, CHRISTIANS and BRITONS, the destruction of a prince, in the opinion of the very ministers of the country, merits an ovation! I would, however, ask this plain and obvious question;—which discovered the greater magnanimity and the greater patriotism, the Prince, who preserved the life of a subject? Or, the Subject that would have taken away the life of his Prince? There is no subtilty, no ambiguity in the question: lisping simplicity might answer it.

The coolness, not less than the  
courage

courage of the Prince, is a theme of admiration to every thinking mind. But coolness is always the attendant on true courage, as mercy and meekness are its inseparable companions. This the gallant Duke manifested in an eminent degree. *He preserved the life of a citizen*, at the same time that he exposed his own to a rash intemperate man. By his conduct he has taught the world this admirable lesson, That to take away the life of another, is an offence against Him who originally gave it;—an offence against the state from which we derive protection. That a Prince, like Him who delegates his power to his images on earth, should have more delight in *sparing* than *destroying*; and that pardon is the privilege of greatness.

greatness. Above all, his moderation has secured the lives of all future Princes in this country. No man, who is not content to pass for what he would not be thought, can hereafter challenge his Prince. The example of the great is prevalent, and that of Kings and Princes more generally extensive. When Harry IV. of France had published an arret against duelling, within the space of twenty-four hours he defeated the very object of that edict. On his journey to Fontainebleau, observing a foldier that had fallen in a duel, the native ardour of his soul broke out with an involuntary impulse in the following indiscreet exclamation,—  
 "That man lies in the bed of ho-  
 "nour!" The expression was in-

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stantly

stantly echoed through the kingdom, and was urged, upon all affairs of honour, as the first and last excuse for duelling. So vast is the influence of a great authority! But the more glorious, because the more virtuous Prince of these days, has, by his great example, checked the false ardor that has gone abroad, without diminishing the lustre of his own heroic spirit. Virtue is true dignity; and never appears to more advantage than when she waits on Princes.

But, for a moment, let us suppose, that the Prince had actually fired at this hot young man. What a crowd of serious reflections rise before us and occupy our minds, whilst we but barely fancy the picture! What?—a Prince set so dreadful an example to



to posterity?—a Prince descend from his dignity, to indulge the pride, by shedding the blood of a contaminated rival?—a Prince degrade himself to an equality with a man so vastly his inferior in the race of glory?—When Alexander was challenged to run at the Olympic Games, he made this great reply; “ I would accept the offer, were kings my competitors!” The loftiness of the answer proved the dignity of the mind that delivered it; and I give it in *English*, that every *Englishman* may understand it.

The next picture, though much too flattering to pass for real, is, “ Mr. Lenox suspending the rage of his arm, and waiting the fire of his Prince.” A more beautiful pic-

ture cannot well be imagined. Great minds may conceive it, and heroes perhaps believe it. It was reserved for Mr. Lenox and the Minister to reverse the tapestry.

Having detained Your Majesty so long, I shall not stop to enlarge on the conduct of Lord Winchelsea, who, like Mr. Lenox, does not appear to me to be a hero, or to have consulted either the safety of Your House, or the dignity of Your Throne. As a domestic attendant on the person of Your Majesty, it was his strong and indispensable duty to have defended Your palace from violence. As an hereditary counsellor of the Crown, he should not have advised or abetted the destruction of any part of it. Robed in the scarlet of honour, he should

should not have tarnished its lustre,  
or dipped in the dye of faction, by  
becoming the *Second of the Second*  
in a transaction that has brought  
such disgrace upon the country.

Here, Sir, allow me to close the  
unhappy scene. An affectionate and  
loyal subject, than whom You have  
not in your dominions one that loves  
You better, or that respects You more,  
beseeches You to pardon the freedom  
that his zeal has prompted him to  
use with his Sovereign. He begs  
leave to assure Your Majesty, that he  
has had no advisers whatever on the  
subject of the present Letter; that  
he has consulted nothing but his own  
feelings, the safety of Your Throne,  
and the dignity of Your people;  
that his faults and offences are all  
his own; and that, let his political  
opinions

opinions be what they may, his respect and regard for the Person of Your Majesty have always continued inviolate. If he has spoken disrespectfully of Your minister, it did not arise from any disaffection for Your Majesty. He thought Your servant had not done his duty; for it was his duty, as a statesman, to have known, that the life of Your Son was in danger; and, knowing it, it was equally his duty to have stepped in, and prevented it.

I trust, Sir, that, on a former occasion, when I had the high honour to address You, the effusions of my loyalty evinced a heart glowing with zeal for Your Person, and attachment to Your Throne. Time has not abated the fervor of my affection



tion, or weakened the impressions of my duty. Your Majesty's gracious reception of my unassuming, but loyal, offering, can never be blotted from my memory : and I am too conscious of the sincerity of my own heart, to doubt or question the greatness of my Sovereign's. But though I were capable of forgetting my fealty, I must always remember the dignity I owe to myself;—a dignity that, whilst it impels me to deliver my sentiments with freedom, secures me from offering the least intended insult to Majesty.

To You, Royal Sir, as the great fountain of honour, I have ventured to submit this solemn appeal on a point of *honour* the most momentous that ever employed the pen of an author,

thor, or engaged the attention of a great nation. As a private individual, I feel myself proud in the honour I have assumed of writing to my King; —to a Monarch, for who my esteem is not less than my affection. Having aspired to this high consequence, I shall not condescend to make the least reply to any answer which may come from an inferior quarter.

That Your Majesty may long enjoy an uninterrupted state of health and glory, of happiness and safety, is the fervent prayer of Your Majesty's most loyal,

most dutiful,

and most affectionate subject,

THEOPHILUS SWIFT.

*Wigmore-street, June 25, 1789.*

F I N I S.

